THANKSGIVING EVE.

BY THE

"PEASANT BARD."

Sing of New England, favored land!
Her customs dear—her social band—
Her everlasting hills that stand
Above her meads,
As when at first, by His command,
They reared their heads!

GREENFIELD, MASS.
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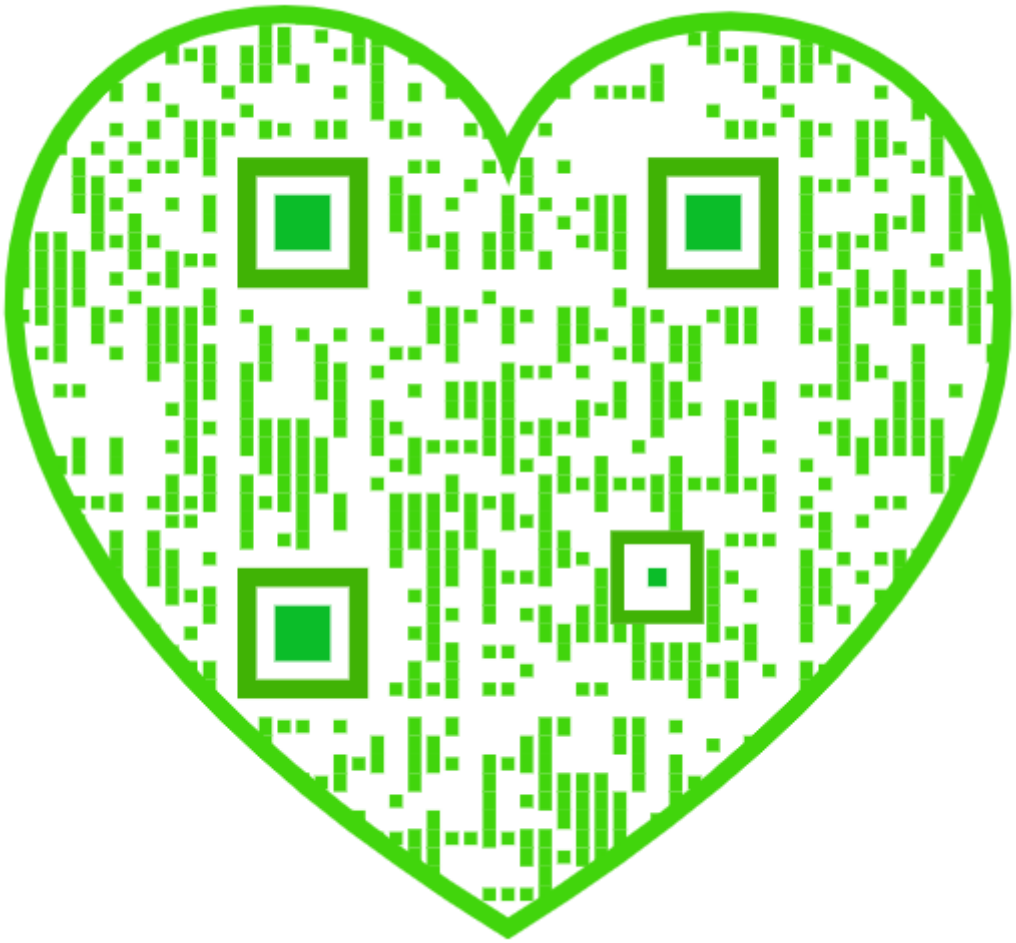

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a.m.p. Mar. 7, 1921

TO

WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT, ESQ.,

NEW YORK CITY.

SIR :

Aware of the condescension necessary to be exercised by one standing high within the temple of Fame, to a humble looker-in at her vestibule, the author respectfully tenders the following poem—a tribute of affection to the memory of a BROTHER whose mortal remains are enshrouded by the waters of the mighty deep. If, sir, it shall be the author's good fortune to introduce to your favorable notice, and to that of a generous public, the remembrance of one whom many knew, and all would have loved, his aim will be answered and his gratitude unchanged while light and life remain to the "Peasant Bard."

Respectfully,

Your ob't servant,

JOSIAH D. CANNING.

GILL, MASS., OCT. 20, 1847.

INVOCATION.

Ye nymphs of song, ye spirits sweet, who haunt my native hills,
Ye who in tiny shallops glide adown their tinkling rills,
Whose voices soft, when stars are bright and Luna's face is pale,
One hears amid the willows green, low in the dewy vale ;—

Come from your mountain dwellings, those airy summits high,
That look into, and take their hue from out the azure sky ;
And moor your fairy vessels, scooped of acorns of the tree,
And from your tuneful streams come up and listen unto me :—

Ye've given me a soul of song, ye've given me a lyre,
And touched a true New England heart with patriotic fire ;
And fain for thee, my country, would I strike an honoring strain,
And sing sweet Ash-u-e-lot's banks, and lift Mo-nad-nock's mane !

Ah, must that lyre in silence hang upon the willow bough !
My hand is heavy grown with toil, and calloused by the plough ;
And when I lift it for a song, and out its numbers bring, [string !
How rude the touch, and harsh the note that struggles from the

But go, ye airy minstrels ! go to Berkshire's leafy vale,
Where bold Tigh-con-ick's tablets tell a very mournful tale :
Where gentle Hous-a-ton-ic threads his pathway to the sea,
And mirrors many a *floweret* sweet, and many a noble *tree*.

Then homewards, to these matchless scenes in Nature's drama fair,
Call Bryant's muse, to ruralize, and breathe her native air ;
O, fittest spot for her, by far, to inspire ideal dream—
His cradle 'mongst the woody hills, beside the wandering stream !

Ye need not be to him a muse;—there's one already given,
Contented with him to abide from out her native heaven;
But be ye not abashed thereat,—she will a hand extend,
For Heaven has given much to her, and much has she to lend.

But join his muse, and spread your wings, and to the mountain go,
When calm the blue expanse above, and sweet the scene below;
When Autumn lingers o'er the land in gorgeous tire complete,
His 'coat of many colors' fine, and silver-shod his feet.

Show her the farmer at his toil, the heavy burthened wain
That weary wends its homeward way across the harvest plain;
The cottages that dot the plain, like scattered flakes of snow,—
The homes of freemen, strong and brave,—these to his muse you'll show.

And mind her of the social joys that, when *Thanksgiving* comes,
Spring sweetly round the festive board in these New England homes;
The tales about the blazing hearth, when evening bars the doors,
And hollow in the chimney-top the coming winter roars.

Then, by the music of the streams, and by the "whispering trees,"
And by the anthem of the Past that swells the mountain breeze,—
Invite his gifted muse to sing by all inspiring means,
And be the burden of her song, Thanksgiving's social scenes.

And give him this! and on his mind impress it deep and strong
That not in hope of rivalship have I essayed a song;
'Tis merely that his better strains with dulness may contrast,
And may he Nature better paint, in colors ever fast!

THANKSGIVING EVE.

"They round the ingle form a circle wide."—ROBERT BURNS.

THANKSGIVING! hail thy festive cheer,
Thou day to all New-England dear!
When Labor by his mattock throws,
And gives his toil-strained nerves repose;
And Care, for want with whom to stay,
Goes off to have a holiday.
When scores of craking fowls must die,
To make the needful chicken-pie;
And turkies, twirling at the fire,
Roast, as the de'il will roast a liar;
And buxom dames, and lasses fair,
The Pilgrim's yearly feast prepare.
When Plenty gives from out her store
A dainty bit, to glad the poor,
And Want, with e'en his stingy grip,
Is lavish of his only fip.
When forge and smithy, shop and mill,
In Sabbath quietude are still,
And artisans of every grade
Are in their very best arrayed;
And cotters, in their homespun own,
Would scorn the wardrobe of a throne.

Thanksgiving! day of all the year!
Ancient and honored custom dear!
When foes with kindlier feelings greet;
When friends, long separated, meet
To knit anew the ties that bind
Kindred to kindred, mind to mind.
When from the towers, in morning time,
Is wafted forth the tuneful chime;
When all the true its call obey,
And tune their hearts to praise and pray,
And up to Zion's courts repair
To dwell upon God's mercies there.

To thee, thy sons, New England, whom
Fortune allures abroad to roam,
Will oft revert, in times like these,
'Cross miles of land and leagues of seas,
And o'er again in memory live
Thanksgiving's blessed day and eve.

Silent, yet swift, the stream of Time
Goes surging down to Lethe's clime;
And, swiftly as the current flows,
The Seasons pass to their repose.
Spring, from her gaudy shallop green,
Flings to the shore a flowery scene;
And Summer, from her leafy barge,
Has cast her mantle fair and large.
Next, borne upon a northern air,
Comes Autumn with her yellow hair.
Thro' all her shrouds the breezes blow,

Now wild and shrill, now lorn and low,
Proclaiming that "abaft the beam"
Comes Winter, whitening all the stream.
The farmer, with a careful eye,
Notes each successive passing by;—
The cold may chill, the heat may pall,
Still he's abroad to welcome all;
And when, at length, as now, has come
Autumn's last moon, and "harvest home,"
Complacently he sees afar
In the cold north the wintry war,
And bides the advent of the storm
With thankful heart, and fireside warm.
Already has the sounding flail
Of harvest over told the tale;
The miller, o'er his hopper leaned,
With practised eye the seed has scann'd,
Declaring, as he stirs it o'er,
He scarce has seen as good before.
The flocks are gathered in their fold;
The herds protected from the cold;
The bees, within their waxen streets,
Are feasting on their treasured sweets;
And all things made secure and warm
That cold Jack Frost might chance to harm.

Now Phœbus, like a wearied wight
Who scarce can wait the coming night,
Cuts short the day, and hastes to rest,
Wrapped in the vestments of the west.
Now steals the hill-fox from his den,

Through piney wood or darksome fen ;
But pausing, ere he dares to prowl,
He lists afar the watch-dog's howl
Ascending from the vale below,
And with his bark defies his foe.

And now the night-created star
Is beaming from its height afar ;
And palely in the northern skies
The mystic signal-fires arise ;
For in mid heaven the moon displays
Her silver lamp of bleaching rays.
Headlong adown the rocky steep
The rill descends with chainless leap,
And chafing, in its fretful course,
Talks to the night in accents hoarse.
Beside the wide expanded stream
The kindling bonfires brightly gleam.
And o'er the ice the skaters glide
With rapid pace and darting stride ;
While Echo on the shore has lent
Her aid to youthful merriment ;
And merry bells along the road
Tell mirth is every where abroad.

Turn from the thronged streets of town
Where gas-lamps shine when suns go down,
And where, despite their magic wicks,
Full many 'kick against the pricks.'
Turn from the sound of viols sweet,
The measured tread of tripping feet,

Where pleasure, like a night-shade born,
Dies in the rosy flush of morn.
Turn ye within the cottage walls
When evening on Thanksgiving falls,
And doff your hat, and take a chair,
And be ye 'free and easy' there.
No compliments are strained to please;
No forced politeness murders ease;
No boorish coarseness mars a feature
Of common sense and right good nature.

O, blessed eve, to Yankees given!
O, foretaste of the bliss of heaven!
There's nothing wanting but a tongue
To sing it, as it should be sung.

The fire upon the hearth-stone glows;
The circle wide before it grows;
The tale is told, the song is sung,
The joke slips smoothly from the tongue.
The thought humane is cast abroad;
The beggar on the frozen road,
The sailor on the stormy seas,
The Indian 'neath the leafless trees,
The child of Want, where'er he be,
This evening shares their sympathy,
And Pity, gentlest child of heaven,
Breaks unto these her blessed leaven.

The parents joy again to see
Their widely scattered family

At home with happy greetings meet,
Like pheasants, in secure retreat,
Whom winding horns, and coursing hounds,
Have frighted from their morning grounds ;—
Who dress their plumes, no missing one,
Forgetful of the ' slaughtering gun.'

In the arm-chair, that fronts the fire,
There sits the patriarchal sire,
Dressed in his garb of youthful prime,
All for the love of olden time.
There's Christian hope and heavenly peace
In every feature of his face ;
There's strength, and fields of labor won
In oak-like arms and palms of bone ;
There's wisdom in his hairs of snow ;
There's honor on his lofty brow ;
His eyes with youthful brilliance shine,
While in his cue there's ' auld lang syne.'

The dame, good woman, by his side,
Just fifty years, this night, a bride !—
Some angel, or good spirit other,
Paint for me this New England mother !—
Reader, think of perfection human,
And you'll be thinking of the woman.
Her placid face, her tidy cap,
The clean, check'd apron o'er her lap ;
No friend of Fashion, like some daughters
Born midst New England's vales and waters.
Would they the fickle jade forsake

And this good grandame imitate!
The very heathen then should know
Of angels dwelling here below.

On either hand this ancient pair,
Are ranged the stalwart and the fair:
The daughter given to another
Who 'sticketh closer than a brother,'
And with him from a distance come
To spend Thanksgiving day at home,
And let her doting parents scan
Her wee edition of a man:
The cousin, bright-eyed, buxom, merry,
Her cheeks the rose, her lips the cherry;—
(Forbidden fruit! so was the apple
That Adam easy found to grapple;)—
The comely youth to manhood grown,
No man of cloth, but nerve and bone;
A scion of that stock which once
Dealt palsy on the British sconce;
Such as, New England, may thy God
Forever raise upon thy sod,
And wide their gallant branches spread,
Nursed by the ashes of thy dead!

See in yon chimney corner wide
A sanguine lad, his mother's pride,
A restless, romance-loving child,
Not wholly staid, nor wholly wild,
Preparing for to-morrow's sun,
The snowy wilds, and dog and gun.

Mark, as the bullets swift are rolled
And glowing, from the brazen mould,
His whispers to another tell
How by his aim some victim fell;
How late the partridge he did win
Full half a furlong, in the glen;
Or how the river-fowl in spring
His bullet crippled, on the wing;
And skillful feats as strange as true,
Which he had done, and yet could do.

And here, too, is an elder son,
For years from home an absent one.
He hails from western lands afar
Where Fortune lifts her blazing star;
Backwoodsman-like he gives a zest
To all the romance of the West,
And with a spirit-stirring air
Tells of his wild adventures there;—
The hair-breadth 'scape from bloody death
What time he stopped the panther's breath;
How, camped one night beyond the border,
His bed-mate was the mas-sa-sau-der,*
And dreaming of some danger nigh
He woke to hear its 'larum cry.
Or how some guardian angel's hand
Brought safe his frail canoe to land,
When in the dark and hollowed wave
The howling demon scooped his grave;

* A species of the rattlesnake; so called by the western Indians.

What scenes his sinking thoughts beguiled
When wildered in the dismal wild;
Or how the dark and silent chief
Came to him, like a drifting leaf,
In silence heard his grievous tale
And took the wanderer in his trail;
O'er mazy miles, with tireless pace,
Guided him to the wished-for place
As straight as flies the homeward bee,
Nor sought, nor would accept a fee.

And there is seen a *pauvre* neighbor,
Worn out with care and thriftless labor,
Invited to enjoy a treat,
And with his bitter mix a sweet.
This night his grateful heart o'erflows;
Unwonted cheer dispels his woes,
And kindly notice makes him vain—
He feels himself a man again.
His youthful days return anew,
His visions and possessions, too;
Tells what he was and *might* have been
Had not *that nonplus* come between
Himself and the desired thing,
And made a subject of a king.

Sweet vision of domestic bliss!
Hath eye seen ought surpassing this?
Could bard or painter who would dress
A scene of human happiness,
'Mongst the few patterns of the kind
Exemplar more befitting find?

Vision of Peace! beneath the tree
And palmy boughs of Liberty.
How do these social scenes contrast
With days of wo and peril past!
Befitting time—Thanksgiving Eve—
A patriot's lessons to receive!

The grandame speaks: her numbers tell
The memories which her bosom swell;
She paints afresh days long agone
When wives were left with firesides lone,
To hear the booming battle-gun
And think of husband or of son;
And wait, with longing and with fear,
Of victory or defeat to hear;
Nerving their hearts to learn that they
Were widowed on that bloody day.

The grandsire is discoursing, too;
Himself one of the lingering few
Like land-marks showing, when we gaze
On revolutionary days.
A martial ardor fills his eye
When pointing back to times gone by;
For though grey-headed, just, and good,
His veins are filled with "soger" blood:—
He counts his father's cuts and scars
Received in old colonial wars;
And hums the air some soldier made
When Wolfe on glory's bier was laid.
The verse uncouth, and faulty rhyme

Blend with an old heroic chime.
His father loved it for the sake
Of memories it was wont to wake,
And aye would sing it when he told
Of Wolfe so brave and Montcalm bold.

He lights his pipe; and next proceeds
With revolutionary deeds;
Which, Æneas-like in Trojan cause,
"He saw, and part of which he was."
Tells many facts with interest rife
Connected with that noted strife
Ne'er honored with historic pen;
Names dates, and places, arms and men;
Tells of his feelings when his gun
He levelled first at Bennington,
And felt upon his cheek the breath
Of swift-winged messenger of death;
With feeling lingers for a time
On Andre's fate, and Arnold's crime;
And dwells upon the soldier's woes
At Valley Forge, mid frosts and snows.

List to the veteran! he extends
A benediction to his friends:—
Remember, next to Heaven's Throne,
Your country claims you as her own.
To One is adoration due;
The other claims devotion true.
Thanks to the God of Battles! now
Before no other king ye bow;

No other king you'll have, if ye
Do not abuse your liberty,
Nor lose in party's bitter waves
Your fathers' altar, and their graves.
  New England points her every son
To Bunker's height and towering stone :—
Below sleeps patriotic dust ;—
Above the changeless God, and just ;—
And bids his aspiration be,
"God and my Country, now and aye!"

Unheeded, thus the moments fly ;
And every hour that dances by
  Prolongs the social scene ;
As when we read, and love to learn,
Each page we scan, each leaf we turn,
  A new delight we glean.

The king in state upon his throne
May wish the sun in heaven gone,
  May curse the wakeful moon ;
Compared with him, how blest are they
To whom Time's flitting pinions play
  A sweetly moving tune !

Now goes around the farmer's cheer,
Fresh from the garner of the year :—
  Autumnal fruit of choicest savor,
The old brown mug of pleasant flavor ;
And, lo ! the Muse awakes !
  O, reader, not the classic jade

Who serves her time, and does by trade
What Nature better makes.

As when, in olden time, at feasts
Where lords were hosts, and knights were guests,
Returning from the boisterous chase,
Or battle's grim and gory place,
Around the board they drew;
Then while the banquet scene inspired,
And every loyal heart was fired
Its prowess to renew;
The bard was summoned, to prolong
The glories of the day, in song,
And of its hero tell;
And loud the plaudits, as he sang,
Among the midnight echoes rang,
And high his sounding shell.

So now, around our humbler board,
Altho' no knight, or lofty lord,
Or laurel'd bard are seen;
Yet there are hearts as brave and true
As e'er from titled scions grew,—
By nature nobler, e'en.

And one, who learned his harp to string
In the green fields, in time of spring,
When music from the tuneful bough
Beguiled his labors at the plough;
Who learned to strike a rural key,
When sadly o'er the faded lea

The Autumn wind breathed slow and clear
Its requiem for the dying year,—
Essays a song; attention give
And hear the story of the eve:—

LEGEND OF THE ISLE.*

Is there a man who loves a marvellous tale—
Some dreamy legend of enchanted lands,
As loves old *Tantivy* October ale,
Or I our river and its silvery sands?
Lend such attention as that tale demands.
The efforts of the muse less notice claim;
The faltering chords bespeak her awkward hands.
Wrapped in her homely robe, with progress lame,
She slowly takes the path which others run to fame.

Let learned muses wander, for a theme,
In Orient lands and fields of classic lore;
Mine draws her subject from her native stream,
And strikes her harp upon its pleasant shore.
In artful plumage neither will she soar
To taste the spring which Helicon distils;
Dearer to her the vine-clad cottage door,
Whose threshold-seat the evening minstrel fills,
And hears his echoed strains among the neighboring hills.

* See Note A. at the conclusion of the poem.

And thou, Connecticut, whose waters first
Baptised thy minstrel a New England born!
Purest of streams! yea, pure as those that burst
From the sweet well-springs of the realms of morn
And fab'lous Fancy's flowery meads adorn.
I think on those, when musing o'er thy flow,
Who wrought in boyhood in thy fields of corn;—
Some, distant far, pursuing Fortune go;
Some, in a sailor's grave, sleep Ocean's waves below.

Say, has the rover from thy shores so free
Found realms thine own in beauty to outvie?
Did not thy dying "wanderer of the sea,"
He who with noble firmness e'en could die,
Recall thy scenes with memory's vivid eye,
And sigh to think he'd view them never more!
Roll seaward, waters, where his ashes lie
Whose memory consecrates for me thy shore;
And blend your lays with mine your noblest to deplore!*

I.

Few but have heard of famous Captain Kidd;
He who for plunder sailed upon the sea—
Of all the many wicked acts he did,
The which to tell were ill-befitting me;
And how, at last, he "hanged upon a tree,"
When Justice overtook him in his crimes;
And in a song gained immortality;—

* Note B.

His name I mention in my marvellous rhymes;
I sing of ancient men, a tale of olden times.

II.

Go view the scene of action whence I draw
The theme which constitutes my faithful lay;
Near where a *prophet bard* a vision saw,
And sang about it in a by-gone day,
An Island rises in the stream midway;—
A lonely isle, where spirits of the drowned,
Forgetful of their homes, are fain to stray,
Wet from the chiming waves, whose drowsy sound
Plays dirges round the shores of their enchanted ground.

III.

Oft, when a boy, by Fancy led to stray
Alone along the river's leafy shore,
What time the musk-rat left his haunts to play,
And all the labors of the day were o'er—
How loved I on the darkening scene to pore!
How sweet on yonder isle was closing day,
Among the noble elms I see no more!
Stern maledictions choke my pensive lay:—
Frost nip the villain hands that cut those elms away!

IV.

To yonder isle, for years it was believed,
Kidd once ascended with his bandits bold,
And, glutted with the spoils they had achieved,
They buried there a chest containing gold;
And by tradition, indistinct, 'twas told

How on that chest a chosen brave they slew
To guard the treasures in their iron fold.
From fiction, it may be, the story grew
And what remains to sing I do not vouch is true.

V.

Upon our shores, far back in other years,
There lived a simple-minded, worthy soul;
His life a constant round of hopes and fears,
As one alternate on the other stole;
He might have "drowned his sorrows in the bowl;"
His hopes, poor man! he might have cherished there;
But how to reach bright Zion's blessed goal,
Was, after all, the chiefest of his care;
And now in heaven's joys we hope he has a share.

VI.

A thin, spare man, he was, of anxious look,
Of stooping figure, and of middling size;
To mortify his sins he read the Book,
Yet valued lucre as he loved his eyes,
Forgetful, that from "mansions in the skies"
A sordid love of gold the soul debars;
Was always clad in antiquated guise;
Lacked both the courage and the force of Mars;
And always came off vanquished in domestic jars.

VII.

Such was the man, the hero of our song;
A superstitious being, fond of talk,
Who would beguile the snowy evenings long

With deeds of those who forth " at midnight walk
To bathe in brains the murderous tomahawk ;"
His own experience, too, he'd linger o'er,—
How witches used his choicest plans to balk,
To blast his crops, and haunt his barns before
He nailed the horse-shoe firm above the folding door.

VIII.

One night this dreamer on his pallet lay ;
His limbs were weary but he could not sleep ;
He pondered o'er the hardships of the day,
How very sore it was to stoop and reap
When burning suns slow thro' the heavens creep ;
To glean a living with unceasing toil,
While favored ones their slavish minions keep
To till for them the fructifying soil ;—
Till with ungenerous rage our hero's blood did boil.

IX.

O, why should Fortune on a few bestow
Her shining treasures, with a lavish hand ?
Fill up their coffers till they overflow,
And turn to gold for them the very sand ;
And crown their worthless names with titles grand ?
While the poor man, to ceaseless sorrow born,
Sees Ruin's taloned whelps around him stand,
Himself defenceless in their midst, forlorn,
Moaning a prayer for pity, but exciting scorn.

X.

O, is there not for me some gift in store
Shall heap with yellow gold my empty board !

How would my heart the giver good adore!—
(Rather than Mammon may he be the Lord!)—
As never yet a being was adored.
How often, then, for charitable deed,
Should beggars' blessings on my head be poured!
The child of Want should on my bounty feed,
And humble worth no more a generous patron need.

XI.

The purse-proud fool, who scarcely heeds me now,
Should wither at my look of cold disdain;
Respectful friends should in my presence bow,
And slaves be proud to wear their master's chain—
He who could make them, and unmake again;
A lordly pile should fill the wishful eye
Where now a cottage peeps above the plain,
And stranger passengers, when going by,
Should stop and ask his name, who built yon mansion high.

XII.

Such were the thoughts that filled our hero's head,
As night apace on circling moments flew;
No wonder, then, that sleep his pillow fled,
Since such bright visions for the while seem true.
But, oh! they wither faster than they grew!
Hard 'tis for man his destined lot to shun,
To leave the road that he must stumble through;
Youth is the rising, age the setting sun—
The same is made to finish what it first begun.

XIII.

Sudden a thought shot through the schemer's brain,
Bright, e'en at first, and polished in the wear:
He felt a total respite from his pain,
He gave a free discharge to every care:
His heart—(or head)—was lighter now than air!
His restlessness awaked his ancient bride,
Who heard the oath that he unconscious sware,
And deemed her good man did the night-mare ride
Through some infernal place, where demons foul abide.

XIV.

Morn rose at last above the eastern chain
Of hills, that mark the river's winding way;
Connecticut, that stole beneath the plain,
Gave to the air her misty mantle grey;
And bared her silver bosom to the day.
Up sprang the black bird from her dewy nest
And warbled sweet aloft her early lay;
While hark'ning puss his playful mate carest,
And Summer smiled around, in all her verdure drest.

XV.

Now in these days, upon the neighboring shore,
There lived a man of whom strange things were told;
A wizzard, at the least, if nothing more,
Who could the darkest mystery unfold,
And for whose soul the de'il a writ did hold;
For thus did gossips of the day declare:—
He for the subtle art the same had sold;
And when he died, the Regent of the Air
Would come to claim his own, and take him, 'hide and hair.'

XVI.

If sheep were missing from their wonted fold,
Or roosts were plundered, would the loser go
And see the conjuror; he might be told
About his loss, and how effected, too,
Before himself had said that it was so!
'Tis true, some hinted it was plain to see
Why the old man should all about it know;
But others thought it still a mystery,
For fortunes, too, he told, and like strange things did he.

XVII.

Scarce had the thirsty sunbeams drank the dew,
Save where it lay beneath some leafy screen,
When, to consult the conjuror, *Ballou*,
Our hero issuing on his way was seen,
With bold determination in his mien.
He with his shadow seemed to run a race;
(And what a shadow was the goal, I ween!)
Hope lit the rigid features of his face,
And oft his gesturing arm bespoke the mental chase.

XVIII.

When doting man is led by meteor whim,
What bright successes on his thoughts await!
He deems the world was made alone for him,
And he the spared favorite of fate,
Whom Heaven journals 'good,' and Nature, 'great.'
So Jack, that bears the phosphorescent fire,
Deludes at night the poor inebriate;
He sees at last the faithless lamp expire,
And bides a wretched time in fathoming the mire.

XIX.

At length upon a hermit-cottage door,
The good man did the scripture promise test;
Cold perspiration ran from every pore,
And fear, with hope alternate, filled his breast,
As with a trembling hand the latch he press'd:
Slowly the door reluctantly gave way
To usher in the dark magician's guest;
But, standing like a frighted deer, at bay,
He wist not how to act, and knew not what to say.

XX.

The light dim-struggling thro' the dingy panes,
Gave to the smoky walls a twilight hue;
A wind-harp sang in melancholy strains
Whene'er without the passing zephyr blew
And softly stole the casement crevice through.
Beneath the window's dungeon-colored ray
A dark, unvarnished board was spread to view;
Death's head and cross-bones in its centre lay,
Which, when our hero saw, he wished himself away.

XXI.

Beside the board, in antiquated chair,
The conjuror was seated at his trade.
He turned him round, and with a fixed stare,
From head to foot his speechless guest surveyed,
Till a grim smile upon his features played;
Then ope'd a volume huge of mystic lore,
Whose yellow pages Faustus might have made;
And while he conned his devilish lesson o'er,
The stranger heard a tongue he never heard before.

XXII.

Then lifting up his eyes from off the book
He on his guest a look of *science* threw :—
'He that would fish must firstly bait the hook ;—
No fishes nibble here until you do.'
Our hero took the hint, and forthwith drew
From out his fob the heart-case that he tanned,
When, years agone, a fatted ox he slew ;
Its contents o'er with wishful eyes he scann'd,
And dropped the half thereof into the wizzard's hand.

XXIII.

Then with the air of one who breathless all
Awaits the footsteps of the fated deer,
He leaned for succor on the friendly wall
And listened to the language of the seer :—
" Adversity's cold winds have blown you here !
So drifts a helmless hulk upon the seas ;
But let the thought your drooping spirits cheer,
The very wind that does the beggar freeze
Wafts others gaily on to honor and to ease."

XXIV.

" Then let it blow !" exclaimed our doting man,
Whose tongue, restrained, had burst aloose at last ;
" I 'll weather well the tempest if I can,
Whoever else may founder in the blast.
My colors, see, they 're nailed upon the mast !
The pirate's crimson stain is on their fold ;
Come, look with wizzard ken into the past,
For by your subtle arts I would be told
Where bloody Kidd concealed that chest of glittering gold."

XXV.

The conjuror took his hazel wand in hand,
And figured for a while upon the floor;
Anon his horoscope and globe he scann'd,
Then fell to muttering his fancies o'er:—
"Bootes" seems begrimmed with human gore,
And fiery Mars with tenfold lustre burns!
Dire meteors fly, and fearful brilliance pour;
Saturn, all greedy, for his children yearns;
And Juno to the earth her shapeless Vulcan spurns!"

XXVI.

Meanwhile, to every point from east to west
His wand did like magnetic needle veer;
At length it halted, trembling to a rest.—
"*Bellum horrificmendum!*" cried the seer,
"The charmed treasure which you seek, is near!
Why nods to me the river-god his head?
Ah! *cujus caput?*—yes, I see it clear!—
Hard by the spot where you were born and bred,
The pirate's booty lies within its *island bed.*"

XXVII.

"Does it? indeed!" again our hero spake.
"Somehow I must have dreamed as much before;
But, tell me, wondrous man, without mistake,
The how, and when, I may obtain *the ore;*—
Here, take my meagre purse!—I would 't were more."
(O, bright anticipation! in thy sun
How melts the heart long frozen to the core!
How freely forth the stingy pennies run
When dollars are at stake, and guineas may be won!)

XXVIII.

So, while he spoke, the wizzard's face grew black,
And scowling o'er his book with earnest gaze,
He looked like hunter searching out the track,
Where doubtful signs his straining eyes amaze;
Or, like a wrecker, peering thro' the haze,
When on the deep he hears the drowning cry;—
He scann'd the changing moon, her ancient ways,
The pictured stars he read with curious eye;
Then to his guest he spoke, and thus his sage reply:—

XXIX.

"There is a charm, which we can scarce dispel,
That holds the treasures which you would obtain;
But harken to perform what I shall tell,
And, ten to one, you will not hear in vain;
Depart therefrom, you 'll sing another strain!—
The fifteenth night, that from her sky serene,
September's moon shines on the harvest plain,
Rise from your bed the midnight hours between,
And seek the island shore all noiseless and unseen.

XXX.

"Upon its southern point there grows an elm—
It's braved the floods and storms for many a year—
Which pilots recognize with starboard helm
When up the stream their freighted barks they steer.
The midnight moon will shine upon it clear;
Twelve paces from its base, by measure made,
The shadow of its forks will plain appear;
Upon that spot descend with bar and spade,
For bloody Robert's wealth is underneath you laid.

XXXI.

"Most horrid sounds and sights you'll hear and see,
Which might the lion-hearted terrify,
But on your part let perfect silence be;
All unconcerned your labors earnest ply,
Whatever fills your ear, or meets your eye
The golden treasures are by *silence* won;
And should you speak, you'll know the reason why.
Keep all a secret—tell it unto none;
And now depart from hence, and see that all is done."

XXXII.

With lightsome heart our hero left the spot
Where he such precious knowledge had obtained;
The birds sang sweetly, but he heard them not;
From viewing Nature's charms his eyes refrained,
He saw them not—for all his thoughts were chained
Upon one mental and enchanting view;
In wild anticipation he had gained
More than was buried by the plundering crew,
And treasure even more than far-famed Crœsus knew.

XXXIII.

At length the hopeful journey and the day,
With him alike were tending to a close;
But still from home content a while to stay,
Upon a neighbor hill, a seat he chose,
That watched above the sleeping vale's repose.
Like molten silver flowed the river there;
That blessed *island* from its bosom rose,
Where soon he was the midnight feat to dare,
And free his heart and hands of all their cankering care.

XXXIV.

His pipe he lit. The vapor upward curled,
And, wreathing, wrought round his bewildered head;
Its fragrance stole his senses from the world,
Save one fond thought by recollection led
To watch the treasures in their 'island bed,'
And half invoke a blessing on the seer—
Till in his dreamy trance he fancied
The clink of dollars in his ready ear
And woke enraged to find his nibbling sheep were near.

XXXV.

Shall I digress to sing thee, Indian weed!
And praise thy virtues, slandered tho' they be?
The muse to thee before has blown her reed,
As many who have heard will witness me;
But thou art welcome to her minstrelsy!
For she, who now about the smoker sings,
At times, without thine aid, how dull is she!
But let thine incense rise!—on glancing wings
Like birds from spray to spray, from thought to thought she springs.

XXXVI.

Upon the hills—back in oblivious year—
That o'er the Indian Susquehannah frown,
While starving hunters cooked a slaughtered deer
A gracious spirit came from heaven down,
And first thy seed from her fair hands was sown.
'Twas to reward them for a pious feat
She gave their duteous hearts this kindly cheer;
For, deeming that she smelled their savory meat,
They, fasting, offered her the choicest bits to eat.

XXXVII.

On pious deeds a blessing is bestowed.
Lo! when the grateful goddess left the place
A new-called herb earth's teeming bosom showed—
Great chief of all the vegetable race!
This, for thy origin, the Indians trace.
Sprung from such wondrous source, indeed, thou art!
For what can sooner smooth the rigid face
Or e'en than sleep more pleasant dreams impart,
Or better lift the while its burden from the heart?

XXXVIII.

But to our tale again. Day after day
The sun slow dragged his intervening rounds.
Meantime our hero's farm neglected lay;
Rank weeds deformed his once well-tended grounds.
His fences fell, his cattle leaped their bounds;
Their master, vexed with more important care,
And wholly occupied with *sights* and *sounds*,
Would frequent to the river-shore repair
To see if all was right, and no molester there.

XXXIX.

His wife oft chid him at this timely rate:—
'My dear! what, in the name of common sense,
Has taken such a hold on you, of late?
What plea have you to offer in defence
Of all your present sloth and impotence?
Rouse up, good man! bestir your lazy feet,
Or ruin sure will be the consequence;
Unless you labor what have we to eat?
For scarcely when we work the year's two ends will meet.'

XL.

"'Tis true good wife, we're poor," he would reply;
"Together we in poverty were wed;
But let us never raise a murmuring cry
To him who gives to us our daily bread;
Besides, somewhere I've either heard or read—
'Afflictions oft are blessings in disguise;'
I doubt not, then, but we shall still be fed;
Perhaps e'en at our door some blessing lies,
For One who cares for us far more than man is wise."

XLI.

How easily may some contentment preach,
When, mostly, secret hopes inspire their tongue!
For even while the good man made this speech
A ragged urchin on his garments hung;
And, as aside its sunburnt locks he flung,
"My poor, unconscious, ragged boy," thought he,
How oft in care for thee my heart's been wrung!
But Fortune smiles;—to-morrow thou may'st be
Heir to such splendid wealth that kings might envy thee.

XLII.

That very night the good man left his bed,
And putting on the garments that he wore,
Deemed, while the silence answered not his tread,
He for the last time shut a poor man's door.
Then silently he sought the river shore,
His stealthy footsteps making rapid stride;
Besides the spade and iron bar he bore,
"The big ha' bible, ance his father's pride,"
He hugged beneath his arm upon his larboard side.

XLIII.

Still was the hour, and sweet the midnight scene;
The moon that in the cloudless heavens shone
Sprinkled with pearls the dewy banks of green
As thick as grain by generous sower sown.
No sound was heard except the wavelet's moan,—
All else the dreadful silence of the grave,
Save when the otter, from his covert lone,
Sought in the stream his furry skin to lave,
And with a sportive plunge awoke the dimpling wave.

XLIV.

But he of whom we sing was soon afloat,
Viewing these glories with a heedless eye;
Stern, silent spectres, watching for his boat,
His fancy on the island-shore could spy,
Which seemed to menace him from drawing nigh.
Poor man! how much he felt no mortal knows;
Despite his hopes and expectations high,
He felt like wretch who to his exit goes, [shows.
When first through glittering files, the waiting scaffold

XLV.

But screwing up his courage to the test,
He on the haunted shore a landing made;
And with a painful panic in his breast
The seer's instructions, one by one, obeyed:—
Twelve paces from the elm, by measure laid,
He found all as the conjuror had told;
Then soon the turf was broken by his spade,
And anxiously he raised the fragrant mould,
While down his pallid cheeks the perspiration rolled.

XLVI.

A gnarled root impeded his descent,
And seizing hold the same, in act to draw,
O, what a groan the horrid silence rent!
You might have heard his heart that beat in awe!
It seemed a dead man's arm, worm-gnawed and raw,
And from it gushed a stream of stagnant gore!
But, shutting hard his eyes on what they saw,
He mentally a prayer repeated o'er,
Then with renewed strength he fell to digging more.

XLVII.

Anon came slowly moving up the flood
A phantom boat, and near the island drew;
The helmsman's headless trunk was spouting blood!
Like murderous demons looked the spectral crew,
As if intent some fearful deed to do!
The poor man's courage fled before the sight;—
Upon his quaking knees himself he threw
And clasped the blessed volume in affright;
Nor did he quit his hold till all again was right.

XLVIII.

But how should he obtain the 'root of evil'?
And wherewithal should he o'ercome his fears?
We read "wi' usqueba' we'll face the devil,"—
Our man resolved to test its virtues here,
For who, but *Nick* himself, might next appear!
He raised the potion to his lips, and thought—
'T was not, indeed, forbidden by the seer;
Enough thereof to drown his fears he sought,
Then, moistening his palms, he like a Trojan wrought.

XLIX.

And now, a full half hour he wrought in peace,
With little to molest or make afraid ;
And soon he looked to see his labors cease,
For deep and wide was the descent he made.
Alternately he plied the bar and spade ;
Nor did he once a timely thought bestow
Upon the ponderous transfer, without aid.
Full oft in *weighty* matters is it so ;—
A sequel often shows we've much to learn and know.

L.

Sudden loud yells, terific rent the air !
Horror possessed the poor man's soul anew ;
For, borne against the tide, a man-of-war,
Around the bend below, came full in view
With bellying sails, tho' scarce a zephyr blew ;
The wail of wo, of agony the scream,
Mixed with fierce yells, and imprecations, too,
Rose from her gloomy decks ; and it would seem
As if the fiends of hell were sailing on the stream.

LI.

The digger leaned upon his spade amazed,
And pressed his hand upon his laboring brain ;
All speechless on the mystery he gazed,
Then rubbed his gloating eyes, and looked again,
The certainty thereof to ascertain ;
It melted into moonlight—it was gone !
And, slowly, as it passed, a solemn strain
Yet, sweet as those by airy pipers blown,
Alarmed him with the wild enchantment of its tone.

LII.

He raised his bar on high, with reckless hand,
And plunged it down, scarce knowing what he did;
It penetrated deep the moistened sand,
And rang beneath upon the ponderous lid,
And clinked the golden bars of Robert Kidd!
"By heavens! 'tis here!" the joyful digger cried;
"O! did I *speak?*"—(as recollection chid)—
While, with a sound like Turner's thundering tide,
Forever from the spot the charmed chest did glide!

* * * * * * * *

LIII.

Star of the morn! whose dull, inconstant gleam
Is fading at the opening gates of day,
How fit an emblem is thy waning beam
Of hopes, once bright as was thy rising ray,
Now gone, like thee dissolved in light away!
Our air-built halls—what baseless things they be!
Like the mirage that with its fair display,
Oft landsmen in the cloud of ocean see,
Which, while thereon they gaze, fades in nonentity.

The tale is told; and *Luna's* height
Proclaims the lengthened march of night.
Already, locked in sleep's embrace,
The 'sanguine lad' is on the chase;
The 'pauvré neighbor' rubs his eyes,
And ventures sundry comments wise

Based here and there upon a word
By dint of winking he has heard.
The grandsire lights his pipe anew,
And calls the story very true,
For he had heard it, years before,
Told by the digger, o'er and o'er.
The grand dame, hitching in her chair,
To give herself a wakeful air,
Yawns forth the question,—"let us see!
He lost the money, did'nt he?"

Renewed once more the burning pile;
And social talk is brisk the while.
A retrospect of life is made,
And future plans are careful laid.
Again is passed around the treat,
And tho' not hungry, you must eat,
Nor make refusal of the cheer—
THANKSGIVING comes but once a year!
The watch-days from their kennel rouse
And think 'tis morning in the house;
And, whining at the kitchen door,
Would greet their master as before.

In order next, the hymn is raised;
Their Father and their God is praised.
The Key is struck, and joined to sing,
Sweet sounds the viol's tuneful string;
And while the notes in concord blend,
Old Hundred's well known strains ascend:—

THE HYMN.

Father of all! to Thee we raise
The feeble tribute of our praise;
O, turn to us a willing ear,
And in Thy glorious heaven hear!

The "times and seasons," in Thine hand,
With plenteous gladness fill the land;
And rolling years, as fast they move,
Proclaim Thy goodness, power, and love.

The blades of spring, the leaves of June,
The fostering sun, and ripening moon,
The searing frost, the mantling snow,
Thy wondrous skill and wisdom show.

Now, in the garner of the year,
Our hearts are warmed with bounteous cheer;
And here, beside our festal board,
Be Thou, the Giver good, adored.

We thank Thee for a home, and friends,
For light and life Thy mercy lends;
For rulers from oppression free;
For this, the land of Liberty!

Thou wert our fathers' God, and Thou
The only one to whom we bow;

Thus, to our children ever be,
The same, and they the same to Thee.

O, may New-England ever share
Thy smiling love, Thy guardian care!
Be Thou her guard, Eternal One,
While mountains stand, and rivers run.

The moon goes down; the fire burns low;
The ancient clock seems ticking slow,
And feebly, with its drowsy powers,
Is hammering out the morning hours.
The grandsire, with complacent look,
Bids some one hand the blessed Book.
Its precious page aloud he reads,
Then, kneeling, in devotion leads;
Gives thanks that in communion sweet
They've been permitted thus to meet;
And in befitting language prays,
That when on earth shall end their days,
To them may their THANKSGIVING prove
Eternal, in the realms above.

O, ye, who are permitted thus to meet
A living chain of friendship, round the hearth
No fractured link, in your communion sweet,
No sad remembrances to mar your mirth;—

Excuse the burden of a saddened heart!
Bear with the tribute of a brother's tears!
Sad is the work of death's embittered dart,
And woful are the wrecks of warring years!

The festive day returns; but never more
To the home-gathering shall the sailor come;
Alas! with him the voyage of life is o'er,
And the loved scenes of his New-England home.

Lo! to my sight in ocean's cloud appears
His own "last hammock" whom I loved so well!
Nor is it fancy wild alone that hears
Deep in its solemn tides a funeral knell!

Called by his country, it was his to share
Columbia's honors with her flag of stars;
The tempest's wrath, the tropic's blaze to dare,—
A noble son of Ocean and of Mars.

But what avail these honors justly won,—
An upward progress on the path to Fame?
Virtue outshines them all, now life is done,
And gilds on Memory's sacred urn a name.

Brother, what nerving strength of soul was thine
"Composed" to die upon the waters wide!
Freely to God thy spirit to resign—
Thy mortal temple to the dark, cold tide!

God of the Seas! note where thy children lie!
Can from thy ken their ashes be effaced?
Vainly, indeed, may search affection's eye
Atlantic's "grey and melancholy waste."

* * * * * * *

Roll, Time, thy rapid wheels without delay!
Roll, solemn Ocean, thine engulfing flood!
Hope mounts aloft to that Thanksgiving day
When I shall WILLIAM meet, the TRUE and GOOD.

THE LAMENT OF THE CHEROKEE.

Air :—' Exile of Erin.'

O, soft falls the dew, in the twilight descending,
And tall grows the shadowy hill on the plain ;
And night o'er the far distant forest is bending,
Like the storm-spirit, dark, o'er the tremulous main ;
But midnight enshrouds my lone heart in its dwelling,
A tumult of wo in my bosom is swelling,
And a tear, unbefitting the warrior, is telling
That hope has abandoned the brave Cherokee !

Can a tree that is torn from its root by the fountain,
The pride of the valley, green-spreading and fair,
Can it flourish removed to the rock of the mountain,
Unwarmed by the sun and unwatered by care ?
Though Vesper be kind her sweet dews in bestowing,
No life-giving brook in its shadow is flowing,
And when the chill winds of the desert are blowing,
So droops the transplanted and lone Cherokee !

Loved graves of my sires ! have I left you forever ?
How melted my heart when I bade you adieu !
Shall joy light the face of the Indian ?—ah, never !
While memory sad has the power to renew,

As flies the fleet deer when the blood-hound is started,
So fled winged Hope from the poor broken-hearted;
O, could she have turned, ere for ever departed,
And beckoned with smiles to her sad Cherokee!

Is it the low wind through the wet willows rushing,
That fills with wild numbers my listening ear?
Or is some hermit-rill, in the solitude gushing,
The strange-playing minstrel, whose music I hear?
'T is the voice of my father, slow, solemnly stealing,
I see his dim form, in the gloominess, kneeling,
To the God of the white man, the CHRISTIAN, appealing;
He prays for the foe of the dark Cherokee!

Great Spirit of Good, whose abode is the heaven,
Whose wampum of peace is the bow in the sky,
Wilt Thou give to the wants of the clamorous raven,
Yet turn a deaf ear to my piteous cry?
O'er the ruins of home, o'er my heart's desolation,
No more shalt thou hear my unblest lamentation;
For death's dark encounter I make preparation,
He hears the last groan of the wild Cherokee!

NOTES.

Note A.—There is an island in the Connecticut river, opposite the village of Gill, Mass., of some magnitude, known as "Kidd's Island." Its name originated in a tradition that Kidd, the noted pirate, once buried thereon a portion of his ill-gotten booty; and this tradition is founded upon the death-bed confession of the pirate's African cook, who stated, among other things, that a part of the crew once ascended the Connecticut a good distance in boats, and upon an island above the "great falls"—(Turner's Falls?)—deposited an iron chest filled with gold and other indestructable precious spoils. Moreover, that after depositing the chest in the earth the crew cast lots among themselves, and the one upon whom the lot fell was slain upon the chest and his body buried with it. This bloody act was supposed to create a charm about the repose of the treasures; and thus guard it from the avaricious attempts of future money-diggers.—However true the tradition may be, it matters not; but certain it is that a believer in the buried plunder, many years since, after due consultation with a noted "conjuror," made actual attempt to obtain the treasures. Notwithstanding his sanguine hopes of success in the undertaking,—a naturally superstitious turn of mind, the midnight hour, the loneliness of the scene, and, above all, the awful *charm* which was supposed to enwrap the iron chest, completely bewildered the brain of the digger; and to the day of his death he affirmed the truth of the mysterious and awful things said to have been witnessed by him while engaged in the unholy attempt; and believed that his bar actually struck upon the lid of the chest;

and that had he not *spoken* in an unguarded moment, he shou have rejoiced in the possession of the untold treasures.

The remains of the midnight excavation are still to be seen b any one who may visit the isle.

Note B.—The banks of the Connecticut have sent represent tives into all quarters of the globe. They have also furnished a unusual number of seamen, both for the merchant and naval se vice. Many of these latter sleep in a sailor's grave, far from t green shores and spreading elms of their nativity. Particul allusion is here made to the untimely death of Assistant Su geon WILLIAM PITT CANNING, of the United States Navy, wh died of yellow fever on board the U. S. Sloop-of-war Vandali on her passage from Port-au-Prince, in the island of Hayti, Norfolk, Va., April 7th 1845, in the 27th year of his age. remembrance of his worth and manly virtues will be cherished b his kindred and numerous friends, till they too shall follow him t the "spirit land;" and graven upon the tablets of their memorie is that voice from the deep sea—his dying message homeward— "*Tell my father I die composed!*" His body was committed t the deep,—

Lat. 31° 50′ North,
Long. 74° 24′ West.